

TEACHING UNIT 1 PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

PLAYTIME. IDEAS TO MAKE PLAYTIME INCLUSIVE FOR ME AND MY SCHOOLMATES

Special Education and Primary Education Categories

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. USING PLAYTIME FOR TEACHING PURPOSES
 - 2.1. PLAYTIME AS PHYSICAL SPACE
 - 2.2. PLAYTIME AS SOCIAL INCLUSION
3. CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

Designing the playground as a learning environment, a resource for creating more inclusive societies, as an opportunity for inclusion, is a reality that is becoming increasingly common in schools and a goal to develop in all schools.

These days, **playgrounds are designed from two complementary perspectives that are bound to converge, the *playground as a physical space* and the *playground as a social space***. The first involves architecture, with material resources in playgrounds and games; while the second focuses on personal relationships, on the presence and participation of all students—always bearing in mind that we are speaking of all boys and girls and will bear in mind all needs and disabilities that pupils may have (people with visual impairments, hearing, motor or cognitive disabilities)—on getting along and the respect that underpins all human relationships. These informal learnings must be included and incorporated both in everyday life and in educational projects at schools, since they **ensure inclusive, fair, quality education for all pupils**, helping to create more inclusive societies and eliminating exclusion from education with education.

When we talk about inclusive education we mean participation in both formal and informal contexts. It means a humane concept of education that advocates for values like social justice, human rights and sustainability. When we talk about inclusive education mean **a new vision of education** that makes it possible to transform lives through education, taking into account the non-curricular aspects that encourage development of emotional wellbeing, personal relationships, personal development, physical well-being, autonomy, self-control and social inclusion. When we talk about inclusive education in the playground we are talking about opportunities to develop all these aspects, **always focusing on the people** and improving their quality of life.

Facilities at schools are governed by regulations, and require there to be a “playground, partly covered, which can be used for playing sports, of a size suitable for the number of school places, which must never be smaller than 900 square metres, which is used at different times by students in different stages of education¹”, each autonomous region is responsible for determining the length of children's playtimes. Some autonomous regions include methodologies that take advantage of playtime in their guidelines during infant education, but this does not apply to the other stages.

2. USING PLAYTIME FOR TEACHING PURPOSES

Children’s playgrounds are important physical spaces at schools where boys and girls share games and experiences every day. Transforming the playground into an inclusive space, a social space where everyone can take part, a sustainable space, should be the objective to achieve from this paradigm of inclusive education.



2.1 PLAYTIME AS PHYSICAL SPACE

Playgrounds are used as sports grounds where all the activities take place. Generally, the largest space is used to play ball games, almost always football, leaving little room for other types of games or activities. Physical equipment like table tennis tables, fountains, benches and green spaces is rarely provided, so **before starting to transform the space, it is interesting to reflect on architectural aspects that impact the behaviours** of boys and girls in the recreation space.

¹ Royal Decree 132/2010 of 12 February establishes the minimum requirements applicable to schools that teach second cycle infant education, primary education and secondary education.

The use given to the playground as a physical space is dominated by specific pupils—always bearing closely in mind the needs and disabilities that these pupils may have—to the **exclusion** of others. **Gender, disability, cultural diversity... may be segregated during playtime**, making this a time for other pupils to walk about alone, individually, or to play in a corner, there is therefore a necessary, pressing need to rethink how it is used. Playtime can become a daily time for exclusion, loneliness and conflict.

It is therefore necessary to have different spaces that may allow all the pupils present to take part in the games. Spaces or corners to play based on their interests, concerns and motivations. Spaces and corners designed by and for them.

Accessibility goes hand in hand with inclusivity, which is a quality that must be catered for in all environments so that they can be used by all people in safe, convenient conditions in the most independent, natural way possible. Accessibility fosters equal opportunities for everyone and goes beyond eliminating barriers, since creating accessible environments and spaces that all pupils can enjoy and use, and always keeping the needs and disabilities these students may have closely in mind, means taking a proactive approach to combat segregation and exclusion in education, during moments of leisure and fun.

Accessibility must be one of the objectives to consider when transforming the playground, take into consideration aspects of physical and cognitive accessibility in schools and the playground in particular, creating and designing truly accessible environments for all students, bearing in mind all the needs and disabilities that they may have.

But this is not the only aspect to be taken into account when designing and restructuring playgrounds, since **education for sustainable development** promotes initiatives of empowerment, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that improve the lives and future in a sustainable manner. This strengthens environmental education that commits individuals to build a fairer world, but also to develop a critical, responsible and committed society.

Proposals to develop sustainable playgrounds will include **education for sustainable development** and should include green areas, school gardens, water fountains, recycled games for use the outside and benches for resting, chatting and relaxing.

2.2 PLAYTIME AS SOCIAL INCLUSION

Playtime as a social space emphasises achieving and obtaining collaborative and cooperative values that promote social interaction. Inclusive education advocates for education for all and is based on a holistic approach to education that encompasses cognitive, ethical and emotional aspects. The playground is the perfect space to contribute to further these aspects with specific proposals that can be developed through play.

Sustainability, peace, living together, mutual respect, dialogue, social justice, care, respect and tolerance. Are values that can be worked on through play.

The playground as a social space is conducive to a lively atmosphere, encouraging personal interaction that promotes these and other values.

This proposal drives inclusive sports and cooperative games that promote values in the school.

Another aspect to take into account to transform the playground is participation. Inclusive education fosters **participation by the entire student body**—always bearing in mind the needs and disabilities that pupils may have—in all the activities carried out in the school, whether or not these are part of the curriculum. Participation is therefore one of the keys to achieving inclusive playtimes that eliminate exclusion, promoting values like happiness, teamwork, independence and solidarity.

To encourage participation by all students it is necessary to ensure that the initiatives carried out will be alternatives to free play, with organised games that will help to include all the children, bearing in mind the needs and disabilities that they may have. In this regard, the Gey Lagar's Parks and dynamic playground's proposal is extremely interesting. This dynamic playground or guided playtime initiative need not necessarily be tutored by teachers; for example, interlevel twinning can be very useful to achieve this objective.

Playtime can also be an opportunity to bring back **traditional games** and learn **games from other countries**, to appreciate cultural aspects from each of the cultures at the school. Reviving traditional games and introducing them into the dynamics of playtime does not just mean providing other ways of playing, but also of thinking and acting, while eliminating barriers and teaching about other cultures in schools by working on interculturality, cooperation and coexistence.

These proposals for **bringing back traditional games and games from other countries** may or may not be guided. They can be taught in physical education and then played during playtime. Suitable materials such as skipping ropes, elastic, spinning tops can be provided, or the games can be painted on the floor. There could be a cultural week to explore interculturality or grandparents could visit the classroom, all with a common objective, to play world games, folk games and traditional games that teach something about the past and about cultural heritage and which also give enjoyment and opportunities to share fun activities.

Understanding playtime as a social space, the school could encourage the creation of a Play Museum created by the students themselves with the games learned during the sessions.

3. CONCLUSION

“By me and my colleagues” is the slogan chosen for this year’s ONCE competition to promote and guarantee inclusive, fair, quality education in schools, using leisure as an essential way of developing qualities such as participation, social learning, sustainability, cooperation, self-determination, coexistence, mutual support and help. Will you accept the challenge?